



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

December 17, 2004

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Bill Richardson
Governor, State of New Mexico
State Capitol, Fourth Floor
Santa Fe NM 87503

Dear Governor Richardson:

Thirty-four years ago this month, the first Clean Air Act signaled the beginning of our country's resolve to dramatically improve air quality. Today, we celebrate the accomplishments of that law that has enabled us to breathe the cleanest air we have ever measured. As 2004 comes to a close, I am pleased to report that this has been a remarkable year for protecting and improving the country's air quality.

The Bush Administration has made implementation of a national clean air strategy a top priority by implementing more protective air quality standards for ozone and fine particles and designing national tools to help meet those standards. Legislation and regulation will be the centerpiece of the President's clean air and clean energy strategy as we move forward. Together, we are on the path to make this generation one of the most productive periods of air quality improvement in our nation's history.

An important part of our nation's commitment to clean, healthy air is reducing the levels of fine-particle or PM2.5 pollution. Fine-particle pollution represents one of the most significant barriers to clean air facing our nation today. These tiny particles, about 1/30th the diameter of a human hair, lodge deep in our lungs, and have been associated with heart attacks, chronic bronchitis, asthma attacks and missed days of school and work.

Key to the reduction of particulate pollution is implementation of the fine particle standards and identification of the areas of the country needing additional work to meet the standards. I am pleased to inform you that all areas in your state meet the standards for fine particles. Your state should be proud of its progress towards cleaner air and meeting the fine particle standards. The challenge now is to not only sustain, but also continue the progress your state has made towards clean air.

To assist you, we have both proposed and instituted rules as part of our national clean air strategy that will bring the vast majority of the country into attainment with the standards over the next decade. Our clean air/clean energy strategy, including Clear Skies legislation and the Clean Air Rules, will cut power plant emissions of sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxides and mercury by nearly 70 percent when fully implemented, and will reduce emissions from off-road diesel fuels, vehicles and engines by over 90 percent — those black puffs of exhaust smoke are going to be a thing of the past. Together, these Clean Air Rules will build on the tremendous progress made in previous decades, and do it in record time.

The last several decades have seen a growing commitment to clean air coupled with a progression of science and technology that has informed our decision-making and driven our actions. I think of our clean air history as a relay where a baton is passed from generation to generation and from Administration to Administration. This Administration has made a commitment to accelerate our clean air progress so that all Americans live healthier, longer, more productive and prosperous lives.

Sincerely,

/s/

Michael O. Leavitt

cc: Mr. Ron Curry
Cabinet Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department

Mr. Richard E. Greene
Regional Administrator, Region VI